

REMARKS

Further consideration of this application courteously is solicited.

Initially, the Examiner's grant of the interview on March 2, 2006 has been appreciated. It is believed that such interview has been very beneficial in furthering the prosecution of this application. Claim 18 has been amended based upon the discussions that transpired during the interview.

As amended, claim 18 now positively recites connections between the nozzle and its source of processing liquid, and connection between the ejecting orifices and their source of cleaning liquid. These structural changes were suggested by the Examiner. Applicants appreciate such suggestions.

Attention next is invited to the deletion of the description "and positioned outside the axis of the rotating shaft." This description also was discussed during the interview. Upon further reflection, Applicants have decided that the more important features in distinguishing claim 18 over the applied art, namely U. S. Patent 5,224,503 to Thompson et al. (hereinafter Thompson), are the pair of circular plates arranged at both ends of the wafer holding members, and the ejecting orifices located specifically for ejecting cleaning liquid onto the surfaces of such circular plates. Even though we submit that the description, "and positioned outside the axis of the rotating shaft," is fully supported by the original disclosure as discussed by the undersigned during the interview, at this time, Applicants prefer not to risk unduly limiting the claim by the presence of this description. Hence, it is deleted.

One further change to claim 18 merits mention. This occurs in the first paragraph of the claim, describing the wafer holding members. It is important to clearly describe the structural orientation of Applicants' claimed processing apparatus. With reference to Applicants' preferred embodiments, for example, that of Figures 3-5, the wafer holding members hold the plurality of

wafers W “juxtaposed in an axial direction of the wafers.” The claim specifically defines such “axial direction” as “being a horizontal direction.” As clearly shown in Figures 3 and 4, an elevator unit 43 lifts wafers in a vertical direction up to the wafer holding members 71a, 72a, and 83a which hold the wafers in a side-by-side horizontal arrangement. As such, the wafers are “juxtaposed” in their “axial direction.” This becomes important when comparing Applicants’ claimed structure to that of Thompson.

After a review of the claimed invention, the interview involved a discussion and comparison of claim 18 and Thompson. This discussion began with a contrast of Applicants’ claimed structure wherein the wafers are held in a horizontal orientation (in their axial direction), just as exemplified by Figure 4. Thompson, of course, teaches arrangement of the wafers in a stack-like structure in a manner opposite to the Applicants’ configuration. With this difference in mind, we move to consideration of the two sets of nozzles or ejecting orifices recited in claim 18. Applicants recited nozzle, located circumferentially with respect to the juxtaposed wafers, supplies the wafers with processing liquid from a source to carry out wafer processing. In Applicants’ Figure 4 for example, the recited nozzle of claim 18 corresponds at least to the several outer chamber nozzles 54 arranged to spray the wafers from their periphery. This “nozzle” of claim 18, also covers nozzles 55 within the inner chamber.

The “ejecting orifices” of claim 18 are very different. In the Figure 4 example, these correspond to nozzles 74a and 74b positioned to horizontally eject cleaning liquid towards the surface of each of circular plates 70a and 70b. As discussed during the interview, Thompson does not teach or suggest such an arrangement.

Thompson has a top port 65 that serves as a primary supply for drying gas. Thompson does not teach or suggest that a wall cleaning liquid rather than drying gas be supplied through port 65. The port is not contemplated as, or is in any way suggestive of supplying cleaning liquid

from any source to the surface of circular plates. Applicants admit that Thompson's nozzles 103 correspond to their "nozzle" arranged for supplying the wafers with processing liquid. However, Applicants courteously urge that Thompson simply fails to teach or to suggest their structure with the "ejecting orifices" of claim 18 that eject cleaning liquid towards the surface of their recited circular plates. Indeed, given that the horizontal orientation of their structure is completely different from that of the vertical orientation of Thompson's structure, Thompson cannot be said to teach or suggest Applicants' recited circular plates arranged at the end of wafers, juxtaposed along an axial, horizontal direction.

For at least the reasons set forth immediately above, it courteously is urged that the rejection of claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated, or alternatively under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Thompson is overcome. Hence, withdrawal of this rejection courteously is solicited.

As to the rejection of claim 18 under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112, this rejection has been made moot. As mentioned above, the description to which this rejection was directed has been cancelled from the claim. This cancellation, however, was done with no admission that the phraseology under objection is new matter.

Claims 9-17, 21, 24, and 25 remain allowed.

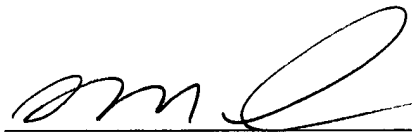
In view of the foregoing amendments and Remarks, it courteously is urged that all of the claims are allowable and that this application now is in condition for allowance. Favorable action in this regard earnestly is solicited.

If any fees are due in connection with the filing of this Amendment, such as fees under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, please charge the fees to Deposit Account 02-4300; Order No. 033082.072.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: March 22, 2006

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